The Communists' deification of the state in the person of its head, their belief in the complete domination of the community over the individual, their contempt for personal freedom, their glorification of obedience as the highest civic virtue, their denial of democratic procedures and their reign through terror—all these are alien to the philosophy of liberalism but characterize other totalitarian systems, such as Fascism and Nazism. Philosophically, Communism, Nazism, and Fascism are not three political systems but one philosophy of government operating under different circumstances. The differences among them are quantitative rather than qualitative. They differ in the proportions in which the same elements are included and in the extent of ruthlessness. Mussolini was the most moderate of the three dictators; Hitler exceeded the two others in nationalistic frenzy; Stalin was unequaled in cruelty, self-deification, and in the degree to which he imposed thought control.

Criticism of Communism must not imply glorification of the old regime overthrown by the March revolution of 1917. The memory of Tsarism remains associated with the pogroms, the Ochrana, the massacre of January 9 in the streets of St. Petersburg, the Beilis affair, the torture chambers in Riga, Stolypin's gallows, the Rasputin scandal. The totalitarian police state of the Soviets did not come as the alternative to that regime but was built, rather, on the ruins of a democracy that had no chance to grow strong and mature during its brief life.

There is one fundamental difference between the Tsarist regime and the rule of the Soviets. The U.S.S.R. is a monolith ruled from the center, uniform politically, economically, and ideologically; old Russia, in contrast, was full of contradictions, with a weak central government and an ineffective local bureaucracy. The official orthodox-monarchistic ideology did not penetrate deeply into the conscience of the people, and its influence was undermined by the scandals in the last years of the Empire.

Moreover, the government, because of its ideological weakness, could not count on absolute submission of its officials to instructions. Among these officials were decent and intelligent persons who followed the voice of conscience rather than the orders of superiors. "Good men in bad places," as the Russian writer Korolenko described them, could be found on almost all levels of the bureaucratic ladder except its very summit, and this made life under the Tsarist rule easier for those who found themselves in open conflict with the regime.

But the Soviet state would treat such men as traitors and prosecute as saboteurs those failing to denounce them. Without total terror and indoctrination of the servants of the state, the Tsarist government was